

REMARKS

Claims 16-35 remain in the application including independent claims 16 and 31. The abstract has been amended to overcome the examiner's objection to the specification.

The original parent application included claims 1-16 and the preliminary amendment that accompanied the filing of the subject divisional application cancelled claims 1-16 and added new claims 17-36. When the divisional application was filed, page 11, which included claim 16, was inadvertently omitted from the application. Thus, the examiner has objected to the numbering of the new claims added by the preliminary amendment as not being consecutive. Applicant has now renumbered the claims.

Claims 18-30 stand rejected to under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The examiner has not indicated any specific rejections with regard to these claims other than the claim numbering objection discussed above. As the numbering objection simply involved renumbering claims 17-36 to 16-35, Applicant is confused as to what further 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, rejections Applicant must overcome. Applicant respectfully requests a more detailed explanation of the 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, rejections.

Claims 33-35 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. Specifically, claim 33 stands rejected to with regard to the phrase "a sheet of colored material." Claim 33 has been amended to clarify that the formation of the layer of colored material in step (a) of claim 31 includes placing a sheet of colored material into the mold to form an outer layer. Because claims 16 and 18 also include this language, claim 18 has been similarly amended.

Claims 16, 17, and 31-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rohrlach '591. Claims 16 and 31 each include the steps of placing a layer of colored material in a mold, placing a layer of polymeric material in the mold, and integrally molding the layer of colored material and the layer of polymeric material as one piece to form a generally flat trailer panel. Thus, Applicant is claiming the formation of a trailer panel in a common mold.

Rohrlach discloses a method for making a vehicle door panel 10, which includes forming a substrate 13 in a die set, removing the substrate from the die, punching key-holes and foam-injection apertures in the substrate, inverting the substrate, cementing a fabric sub-panel 11 over an arm rest portion 26 of the substrate, and depressing edges of the fabric sub-panel 11 into a groove 20 in the substrate with a tool 28. Next, a sheet of velour, which will form a main fabric panel 12, is stretched over a frame 32. The substrate is then placed in a second die set 38 where subsequent processing steps are performed to form a finished door panel.

First, Rohrlach is directed toward the formation of a vehicle door panel, which is very different than a trailer panel. Door panels are very small in size compared to trailer panels and involve more complex design constraints. Second, Applicant is claiming the formation of a

trailer panel within a common mold, which is very different than that taught by Rohrlach.

Rohrlach teaches separately forming a substrate, see col. 2, line 54, and then performing several additional steps, such as separately attaching fabric panels to the substrate, to form the door panel.

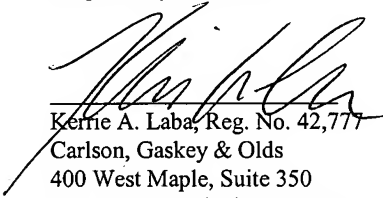
Claim 31 includes the additional steps of forming a plurality of trailer panels and then mounting a plurality of trailer panels to a trailer superstructure frame to form a vehicle trailer.

Nowhere in Rohrlach is this disclosed, taught, or shown. Rohrlach does not even mention a trailer or accompanying trailer panels. The only disclosure of trailer panels is found in the subject application, which cannot be used as motivation or suggestion under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) to modify a base reference.

The rejection of claims 34 and 35 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rohrlach in view of Sjostedt is moot in light of the arguments detailed above.

Applicant believes that no additional fees are due, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482 in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds for any additional fees.

Respectfully submitted,

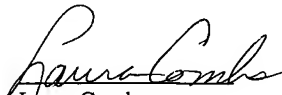


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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that the enclosed Amendment is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first-class mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Assistant Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231, on this 19th day of November, 2002.



Laura Combs

APPENDIX A

Abstract

(Version With Markings to Show Changes Made)

A vehicle trailer [with] includes large side panels that are attached to a trailer superstructure. A method and apparatus for making the panels includes forming composite panels that are lightweight and economical to manufacture. [A superstructure has a plurality of attached composite panels.] In one embodiment, the superstructure has grooves for receiving the composite panels. The composite panels preferably fit together via a tongue and groove configuration. Alternatively, the superstructure has support beams that have threaded receiving holes. Each composite panel then includes threaded inserts aligned with the receiving holes and that attach to the receiving holes. In both embodiments, each composite panel preferably includes at least an outer colored layer, a sheet of polymeric material attached to the colored layer and an inner layer attached to the polymeric material. Other layers can be added depending upon the use of the vehicle. For instance, a layer of insulating foam can be added if the vehicle is to be refrigerated. Further, an additional structural support layer can be added to increase the strength of the walls.

APPENDIX B

Claims

(Version With Markings to Show Changes Made)

[17] 16. (Amended) A method of forming a trailer panel for attachment to a vehicle trailer comprising the steps of:

- (a) placing a layer of colored material in a mold;
- (b) placing a layer of polymeric material in [a] the mold;
- (c) integrally molding the layer of colored material and the layer of polymeric material as one piece to form a generally flat trailer panel; and
- (d) mounting the trailer panel to a trailer superstructure frame.

[18] 17. (Amended) The method according to claim [17] 16 including the step of placing an inner layer into the mold prior to step (b) to form an inner surface of the trailer panel.

[19] 18. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 17 wherein the formation of the layer of colored material in step (a) includes placing a sheet of colored material into the mold to form an outer layer presenting an outer surface of the trailer panel, step (b) includes the step of injecting the polymeric material into the mold to form a central layer; and step (c) includes the step of integrally molding the inner layer, the central layer, and the outer layer as one piece prior to step (d).

[20] 19. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein the outer layer comprises a paintless polymer film.[.]

[21] 20. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein the outer layer comprises a prepainted aluminum.

[22] 21. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein the polymeric material includes reinforcing fibers.

[23] 22. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein the inner layer comprises a metallic material.

[24] 23. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein the inner layer comprises a polymeric material.

[25] 24. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 including the step of injecting a layer of insulation into the mold.

[26] 25. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 including the step of injecting a structural support layer into the mold for forming at least one rib.

[27] 26. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein step (d) includes forming a male member in one of the trailer superstructure frame or the trailer panel, forming a female member in the other of the trailer superstructure frame or the trailer panel, and inserting the female member into the male member.

[28] 27. (Amended) The method according to claim [27] 26 including the steps of forming the female member as a tongue along at least one edge of the panel and forming the male member as a groove on the trailer superstructure frame.

[29] 28. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 wherein step (d) includes forming receiving holes in support beams of the trailer superstructure frame, mounting threaded fasteners to the trailer panel, and threading the fasteners into the receiving holes.

[30] 29. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 including the step of forming at least one wiring conduit in the trailer panel during step (c).

[31] 30. (Amended) The method according to claim [19] 18 including the step of forming at least one electrical outlet in the trailer panel during step (c).

[32] 31. (Amended) A method of making panels to form a vehicle trailer comprising the steps of:

- (a) placing a layer of colored material in a mold;
- (b) placing a layer of polymeric material in [a] the mold;
- (c) integrally molding the layer of colored material and the layer of polymeric material as one piece to form a generally flat trailer panel;
- (d) repeating steps (a) – (c) to form multiple trailer panels; and
- (e) mounting a plurality of trailer panels to a trailer superstructure frame to form a vehicle trailer.

[33] 32. (Amended) The method according to claim [32] 31 including the step of placing an inner layer into the mold prior to step (b) to form an inner surface of the trailer panel.

[34] 33. (Amended) The method according to claim [33] 32 wherein the formation of the layer of colored material in step (a) includes placing a sheet of colored material into the mold to form an outer layer presenting an outer surface of the trailer panel, step (b) includes the step of injecting the polymeric material into the mold to form a central layer; and step (c) includes the step of integrally molding the inner layer, the central layer, and the outer layer as one piece prior to step (e).

[35] 34. (Amended) The method according to claim [34] 33 wherein step (e) includes providing the superstructure frame with multiple support beams spaced apart from one another to

form a plurality of trailer panel installation positions and further includes the step of installing one trailer panel in each installation position.

[36] 35. (Amended) The method according to claim [35] 34 including forming a first mount at on the support beams at each installation position, forming a second mount on each trailer panel, and engaging the first and second mounts to secure each trailer panel to the superstructure frame.